BALTIMORE COUNTY LAND PRESERVATION, PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

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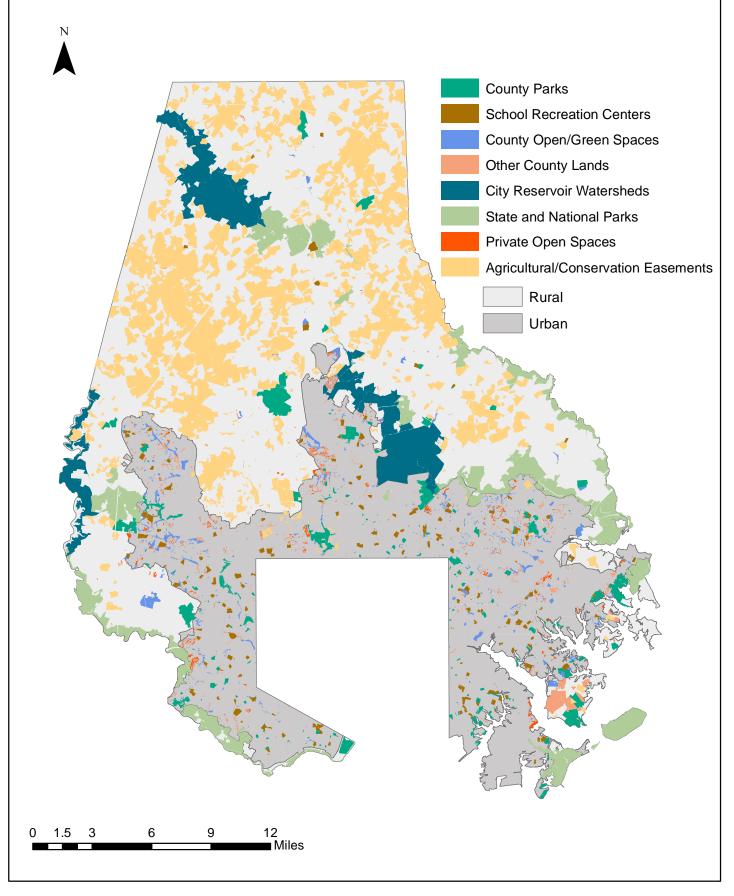


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Preserved Land in Baltimore County











Executive Summary

Parks play an important role creating a high quality of life for Baltimore County residents by providing areas for recreation and relaxation, maintaining a healthy natural environment, and making spaces available for cultural and social activities. In the past few years, the Department of Recreation and Parks has seen increasing park visitation, with more people opting for outdoor exercise and gatherings. The Department of Recreation and Parks has initiated numerous new and exciting projects, including parkland acquisitions, new park development, and park renovations and enhancements, in an effort to provide expanded and equitable recreational opportunities.

The previous Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) was adopted in 2017 and has served as a guide for the Department of Recreation and Parks for the last five years. The new plan that follows provides an update on the status of parks and recreation in Baltimore County, documents progress made toward the goals set in 2017, assesses current parks and recreation infrastructure and community needs, and presents recommendations to better serve Baltimore County residents.

Chapter One, Introduction, gives an overview of the plan, its legislative context, and the County's geography and demographics. This plan is submitted to the State of Maryland to maintain eligibility for Program Open Space, which provides grants for land acquisition and park development. With some areas of Baltimore County projected to see 4-6% growth in population from 2025-2035, it is vital that greenspaces be updated and expanded to serve more densely populated communities.

Chapter Two, Recreation and Parks Inventory, is a comprehensive account of County, State, and National parks, school recreation centers, special facilities, and other open/greenspaces. Together, these represent 88.3 square miles, or 15% of Baltimore County.

Chapter Three, Measuring User Demand, presents the results of staff interviews, public meetings, and an online survey. The survey revealed a high desire for bicycle lanes, nature trails, and paved paths, and undeveloped greenspaces, all amenities for non-organized recreation. Pickleball, which has recently risen in popularity, was also requested at a high rate. Responses on the current state of parks and recreation services varied across the County, with areas west of Baltimore City generally registering the lowest ratings. While the online survey was intended to reach all County residents, the survey responses were not evenly distributed across the County. These shortcomings highlight a need to reach out in a more targeted manner to those whose voices have not yet been heard.

Chapter Four, Level of Service, evaluates the geographical distribution of amenities, to determine which areas are being underserved relative to the County average. While the results vary depending on the amenity, the West Central and West regions of the county frequently emerge as having less access than the county average. These regions were also among those identified as having low park equity, along with the West Southwest, and parts of the Northwest. These regions should be high priorities for park acquisition and development.

Chapter Five, Goals and Objectives, documents the progress made toward goals set in 2017. Over five years, fifteen sites were acquired to serve as parks or green spaces, including a 225-acre addition to an existing park, and several smaller acquisitions in urban areas. This chapter also summarizes the results of previous sections, for each of the regions of the County defined in Chapter One, detailing both general priorities and specific projects identified in the outreach process. These will help to guide future capital improvements.

Chapter Six, Implementing Programs, lists the funding resources typically used for Recreation and Parks projects and their purposes. Program Open Space provided an average of \$6.75 million annually from Fiscal Year 2019- 2022. Other sources of funding include other State aid, County general funds, bonds, and debt premiums, local open space waiver fees, and occasional other unique sources.

Chapter Seven, Capital Improvement Plan, includes a list of projects that the Department of Recreation and Parks hopes to carry out in the coming years, both providing details on specific projects and cataloging general priorities based on the analysis of the LPPRP and other known needs.

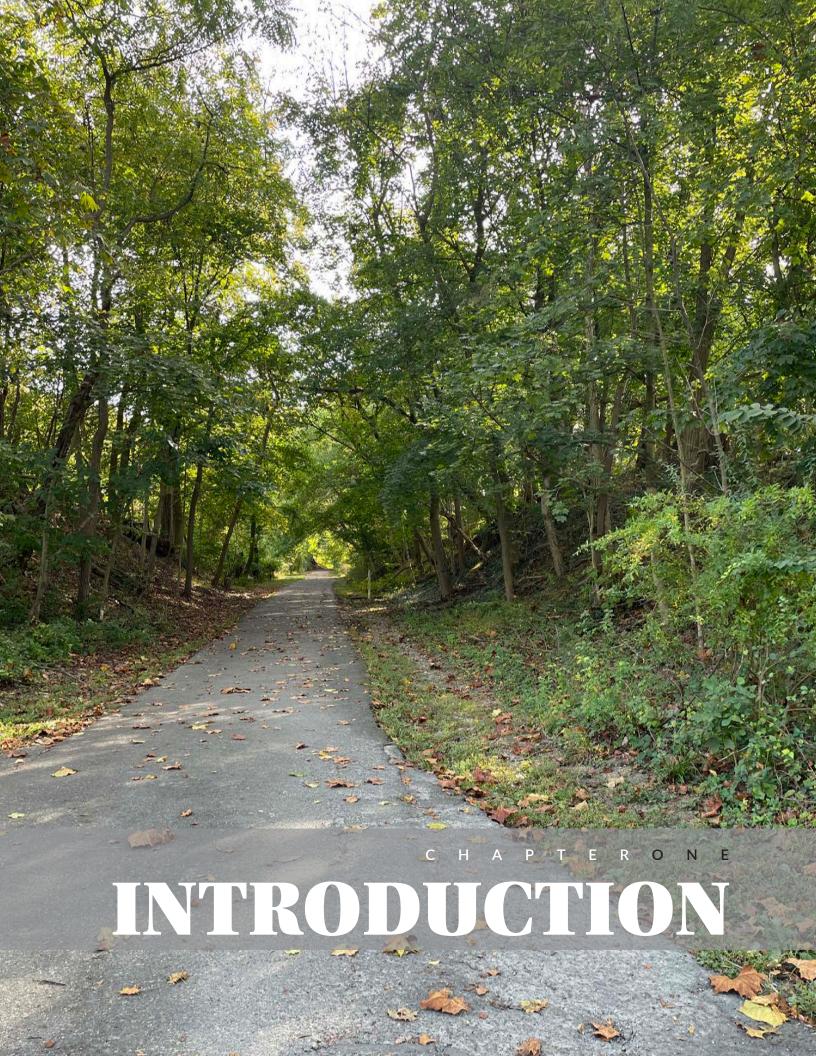
Chapter Eight, Natural Resource Land Conservation, is an overview of the important natural resources that Baltimore County aims to protect, including forested lands, plant and animal habitats, streams and waterways, and Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas. Our parks play an important role in maintaining and improving all of these natural resources.

Chapter Nine, Agricultural Land Preservation, inventories the land that is held in agricultural and conservation easements, totaling 103.4 square miles or 17% of the County's land. Baltimore County is certified by the Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation through June 30, 2023, in recognition of the County's policies that maintain an agricultural industry and culture.

This plan documents the significant recreational assets of Baltimore County while outlining areas for improvements. As in 2017, the analysis identified a need for land acquisitions in the densely populated parts of western Baltimore County and other urban regions. Through the survey, written comments, and oral testimony at the public meeting, residents asked for additional walking and biking paths and better connectivity. Also through the survey and comments about specific facilities, residents expressed a need for maintenance at existing sites. New in 2022, there was a strong push for additional pickleball facilities and, to a lesser extent, disc golf courses.

In the next five years, the Department of Recreation and Parks aims to respond to the needs expressed, building on an already strong network of greenspaces, community centers, and athletic facilities, to better and more equitably serve a growing and changing Baltimore County.





1.1 - Plan Overview

The Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) serves as a planning document that outlines Baltimore County's efforts in three general realms of land conservation—parks and recreation, natural resource conservation, and agricultural land preservation. The County has long been recognized as a national leader in land conservation, with its strong multi-tier approach of growth management, agricultural preservation, environmental policy, and park acquisition and development. The LPPRP serves as a planning document for the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP), particularly for capital projects including park acquisition, development, and rehabilitation.

This plan provides a summary of the County's land preservation and conservation vision, outlining what is in place as well as what gaps remain. Resident input on both the current status of parks and recreation and future needs is incorporated into the LPPRP. The following text presents goals and implementation strategies that will guide the County in serving the needs of residents and visitors and protecting the environmental well-being of the local lands, waters, flora, and fauna.

It is important to bear in mind that the LPPRP serves as an advisory plan, and that the recommendations contained herein do not represent tangible fiscal commitments. The availability of capital funding resources, in particular, have a great bearing on the County's ability to purchase land, construct and improve parks, and undertake capital rehabilitation and enhancement projects ranging from park renovations, to stream restoration, to shoreline erosion control measures. This plan instead serves as a general guide, and more comprehensive fiscal planning remains an ongoing process that eventually comes to fruition during the County's capital budgeting process.

1.2 - Legislative Background

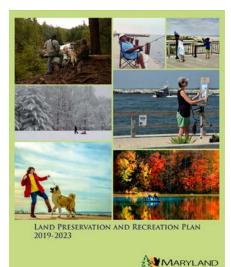
Maryland Program Open Space (POS) Law, as presented within Title 5, Subtitle 9 of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, requires each county to prepare an LPPRP every five years to maintain eligibility for funding through POS.

PROGRAM OPEN SPACE (POS) is the State of Maryland's preeminent funding program for parklands and recreational facilities. POS was established in 1969 through the enactment of a dedicated tax, the statewide real estate transfer tax (a 0.5% tax on most property transfer transactions). Revenues from the tax are utilized for state, local and municipal parks and recreation capital projects ranging from the acquisition of park sites, to construction of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, to capital renovations of existing parks and facilities.

Baltimore County has been allocated nearly \$130 million since the inception of local POS funding in 1970, an average of about \$3.25 million per year. The County's three largest annual allocations were received in fiscal years 2006 – 2008, when its net apportionments averaged approximately \$9.7 million per year. Because POS funding is based upon the amount of incoming real estate transfer tax revenues, the amount of funding is variable and fluctuates with economic conditions. Transfer tax revenues have grown steadily over the last five years. Whereas Baltimore County's apportionment (as established by a State formula) was less than \$3 million in each of Fiscal Years 2015 – 2017, the average annual allocation increased to more than \$6.75 million in the four-year period including Fiscal Years 2019 through 2022.

The prior Baltimore County LPPRP was adopted by the Baltimore County Council on May 25, 2017. That plan served primarily as an update to the 2012 County LPPRP, repeating certain content from that plan and providing information on the progress that has been achieved towards its capital project priorities. Likewise, this plan provides an updates on the progress toward the objectives set in the 2017 plan.

1.3 Broader Planning Context



It is important to understand the role of the LPPRP within Baltimore County's overall planning process. The LPPRP is just one of many planning tools and documents that help guide the County in its efforts to provide the residents of the County every opportunity to have a high quality of life, while maintaining a delicate balance between preservation and development. Other notable planning tools are the Baltimore County Master Plan (including its water resource element), the dozens of adopted community plans from throughout the County, initiative-based planning documents such as the County's bicycle and pedestrian access plans, the County's development and growth management policies and regulations, and numerous environment-focused plans. All of these plans, including the LPPRP, support state and federal plans and initiatives, including the State of Maryland's Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.

This LPPRP remains closely tied to the most recent Baltimore County comprehensive plan, Master Plan 2020 (MP2020). Throughout this document there are excerpts and references to MP2020, whose plan vision carries over to this LPPRP:



Create and maintain safe and sustainable communities, to achieve a sensible balance of economy, equity, and environment for people to reside, work, pursue careers, raise families, and enjoy the amenities in Baltimore County, Maryland.

The planning process for the Master Plan 2030 (MP2030) is concurrent with the 2022 LPPRP. While the final MP2030 document is not complete, resident feedback collected as part of the MP2030 process is incorporated in the assessment and recommendations below.



The LPPRP serves as an advisory plan and that the recommendations contained herein do not represent fiscal commitments. This plan serves as a general guide, and more comprehensive fiscal planning remains an ongoing process. Residents and interested parties are encouraged to offer their input through the public input opportunities provided in conjunction with the capital budget – capital improvement program (CIP) processes.

1.4 Geographic Characteristics

Baltimore County comprises approximately 608 square miles of land and inland waters such as the reservoirs, lakes, and non-coastal rivers and streams. The County boasts very diverse landscapes, including scenic Chesapeake Bay shorelines and vistas, dense and bustling urban areas, substantial forested tracts, a vast network of streams and rivers, large and tranquil water reservoirs, and tens of thousands of acres of rolling hills, pastures, and farmlands.

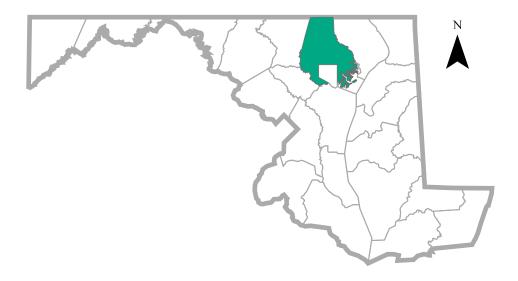


Figure 1. Location of Baltimore County within Maryland

Approximately 80% of the County's land is situated within the physiographic province called the Piedmont Plateau, which is characterized by rolling terrain, low ridges and distinct stream valleys. The remaining 20% of the County is located within the relatively flat to gently sloping Coastal Plain province. The physical character of these provinces greatly shape the County. A number of geographic features, growth management policies, and environmental programs likewise help to define and maintain the County's overall character.

Baltimore County is in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The rivers, streams, and wetlands are an invaluable natural resource. A defining geographic feature of Baltimore County is the approximately 232 miles of shoreline. These coastal waters provide a wide range of recreational opportunities including swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing, and recreational boating.



Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas

Lands adjacent to the Bay and its tidal tributaries are largely protected through the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Program shown in a map on the following page. Enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 1984, this program established a 1000-foot area along the tidal influence of the Chesapeake Bay as a critical area in which development would generally be limited for the purpose of protecting the Bay. Categories of lands within the critical areas were created and defined-- intensely developed areas (IDA), limited development areas (LDA), and resource conservation areas (RCA). Land use and management criteria were formulated for each of the three classifications, and act as a key tool to manage and limit development within the 1000-foot area.

Greenways

Greenways, shown in a map on the following page, are networks of open space and parklands, typically linear in form, which are utilized for preservation, recreation or both. Most greenways in Baltimore County are associated with stream valleys. Some greenways include trails, including: the Cooper Branch, along which runs the Number Nine Trolley Line Trail; Red Run, along which the County's newest greenway trails were developed to serve the Owings Mills Growth Area; and Little Falls and Beetree Run, the streams along which the State's Torrey C. Brown (formerly North-Central) Rail Trail is situated. Greenways also serve as valuable wildlife corridors.



Greenways and Critical Areas

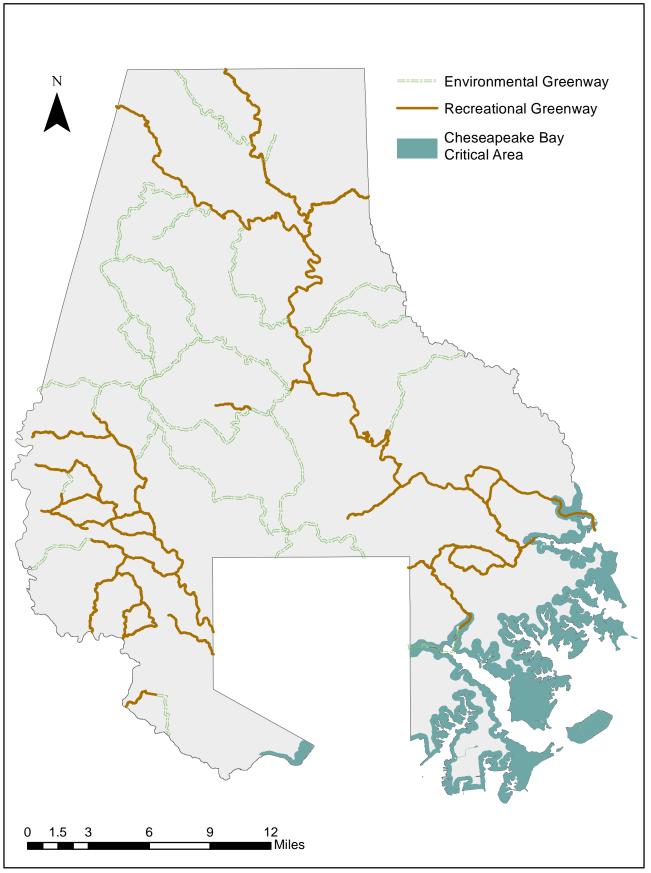


Figure 2. Greenways and Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas

1.5 Recreation and Parks Planning Geography

Recreation and Parks Councils and Regions

Baltimore County's Recreation and Parks Councils are resident-based, non-profit volunteer groups that are responsible for the majority of organized recreation programs that take place at County recreational facilities. As of December of 2021, there are 37 traditional recreation councils. DRP relies upon council volunteers to provide the recreation programs that serve the public, to raise funds to support those programs, and to provide input regarding local recreational facilities' needs. There are also seven councils dedicated to special facilities, such as Baltimore County's nature centers.

The recreation councils are currently grouped into four recreation and parks regions for the oversight of recreation services. Each of these regions is administered by a Regional Coordinator who oversees Community Recreation Supervisors assigned to the communities and recreation and parks councils of the region. Staff in each of the regions work closely with local recreation and parks councils, who provide the majority of formal, organized recreational programming to the residents of the County. It should be noted that not all parks or recreational facilities are managed as part of a region, and that regional and countywide parks and associated staff are managed in a different manner not directly associated with the regions.

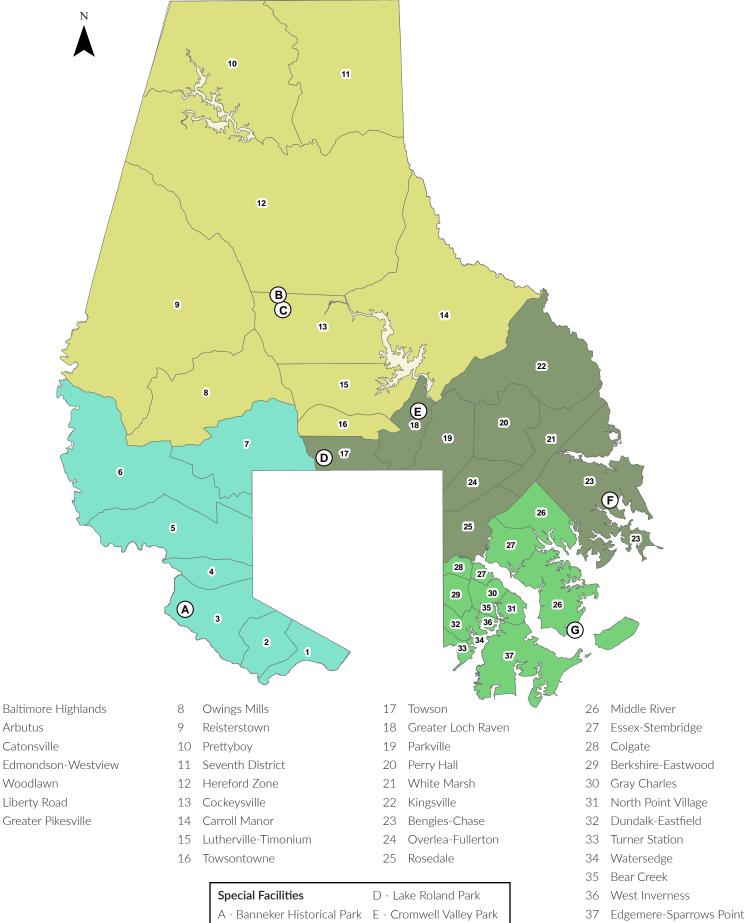
The Department of Recreation and Parks' administrative geography enables the organized activities of the volunteer recreation and parks councils. Recreation Services field staff and their counterparts in the Agriculture, Nature, and Special Facilities Section are stationed throughout the County, each working in a community or special facility office that works with one or more council(s) and administers the parks and recreation physical resources within the bounds of their assigned council(s) or park. These offices and the associated councils operate cooperatively to try to meet the diverse recreational needs of the residents.







Recreation Councils and Regions



- B Farm Park and Ag Center F Marshy Point Park
- C Oregon Ridge Park

G - Rocky Point Park

Regional Planning District Groups

Beginning with the 2017 LPPRP, the DRP has used Regional Planning District Groups to analyze recreation and parks assets and needs. While councils and regions are reorganized through merging or other changes in geographical boundaries, these groupings remain stable, enabling comparisons between years to understand if progress is being made toward the DRP's objectives. Regional Planning Districts are defined by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) as follows:

Regional Planning Districts are a somewhat larger district level of geographic detail used in transportation planning to summarize demographic characteristics and travel data for an identifiable area. RPDs follow census geography boundaries and contain one or more census tracts ... RPD boundaries have been kept essentially the same since they were developed in the early 1970's. This allows comparison of data over time for a stable geographic unit.

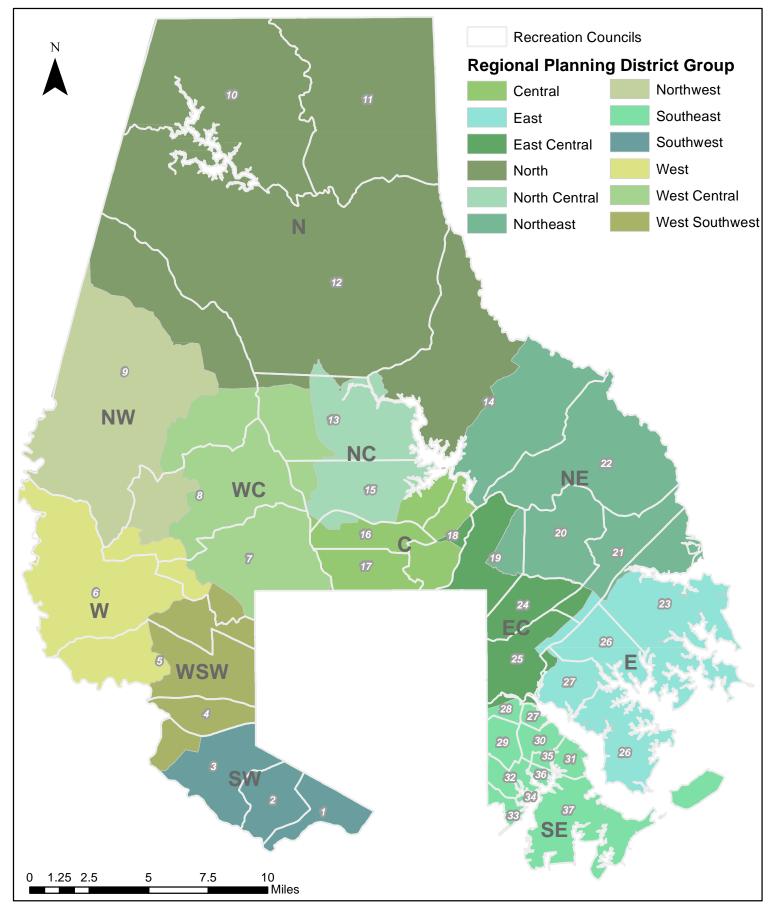
Within this plan RPDs have been grouped into twelve geographically designated RPD Groups. The following table identifies the groups and associated RPDs, and Recreation Councils. In some cases a recreation council may be listed within multiple RPD Groups, reflecting the fact that substantial portions of the recreation council are situated within the bounds of multiple RPD Groups.

It should be noted that the recreation councils remain the functional entities through which organized recreation programs are provided for County residents. The number of traditional recreation councils dropped by three between the 2012 and 2017 LPPRPs and by one between the 2017 and 2022 LPPRPs, making them a poor unit of comparison. In addition, the recreation region boundaries have changed multiple times, with the most recent reorganization occurring in January 2022. To enable stable comparisons, the RPD groups will be used throughout this LPPRP.

| RPD GROUP | INCLUDED RPDS | ASSOCIATED RECREATION COUNCILS |
|----------------|-----------------|---|
| Central | 314,315 | Greater Loch Raven, Towson, Towsontowne |
| East | 322,327,328 | Bengies-Chase, Essex, Middle River |
| East Central | 316,320,321,326 | Overlea-Fullerton, Parkville, Rosedale |
| North | 301,302,304,305 | Carroll Manor, Hereford Zone, Prettyboy, Seventh District North Central |
| North Central | 308,309 | Cockeysville, Lutherville-Timonium |
| Northeast | 310,317,318 | Carroll Manor, Kingsville, Perry Hall, White Marsh Northwest |
| Northwest | 303,306 | Owings Mills, Reisterstown |
| Southeast | 329,330,331 | Bear Creek, Berkshire-Eastwood, Colgate, Dundalk- Eastfield, Edgemere-Sparrows Point, Gray Charles, North Point Village, Turner Station, Watersedge, West Inverness |
| Southwest | 324,325 | Arbutus, Baltimore Highlands, Catonsville West |
| West | 311,312 | Liberty Road, Woodlawn |
| West Central | 307,313 | Owings Mills, Greater Pikesville |
| West Southwest | 319,323 | Edmondson-Westview, Liberty Road, Woodlawn |

Table 1. Regional planning district groups' associated RPDs and rec councils

Regional Planning District Groupings



1.6 Demographic Characteristics

The Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL) delineates between the urban portion of the County in which development and government services are concentrated, and the rural areas that are more natural and far less developed and populated. About a third of the area of the County is situated within the urban portion of the URDL.

The urban area includes residential and commercial community conservation areas, employment centers, the Towson Urban Center, the Owings Mills Growth Area, and the Middle River Redevelopment Area. The rural portion of the County features agricultural preservation areas, resource preservation areas, rural residential areas, and two rural commercial centers—Hereford and Jacksonville. Parts of this rural section of the County preserve the County's rich equine heritage that continues to this day. The URDL is represented in many of the maps in this report.

Community Conservation Areas are established communities and commercial centers in densely populated areas of the County, generally adjacent, or in close proximity, to Baltimore City. They are designated land management areas within Master Plan 2020. Targeted revitalization efforts seek to retain or enhance the areas' attractiveness and functionality.

The population of Baltimore County is projected to be approximately 860,500 in 2025. Population Density is generally highest in the urban regions surrounding Baltimore City. The Southwest, West Southwest, Central, and Eastern Central RPD groups are the most densely populated areas, using population estimates for 2025. The North RPD group, which is completely within the rural part of the county, is the least densely populated. From 2025 to 2035, the Northwest, East Central, and East RPD Groups are expected to see the greatest levels of population growth, around 4-6 percent.

Parks and recreation facilities are of particular importance within communities that are densely populated or growing in population, as much of the land may be converted from open space to residential and commercial developments. Several projects to provide open space, parks, and recreation centers are already underway in these areas. Less densely populated areas may still have needs for recreation facilities like athletic fields and indoor recreation, despite greater access to undeveloped land.

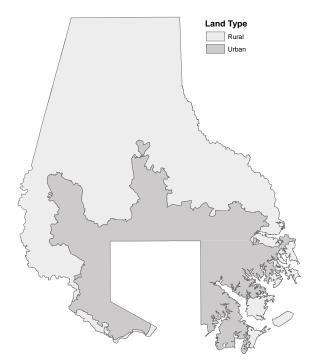


Figure 5. Urban Rural Demarcation Line

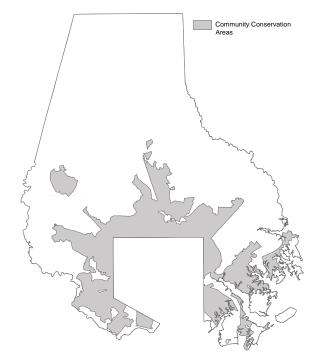


Figure 6. Community Conservation Areas

Population Density

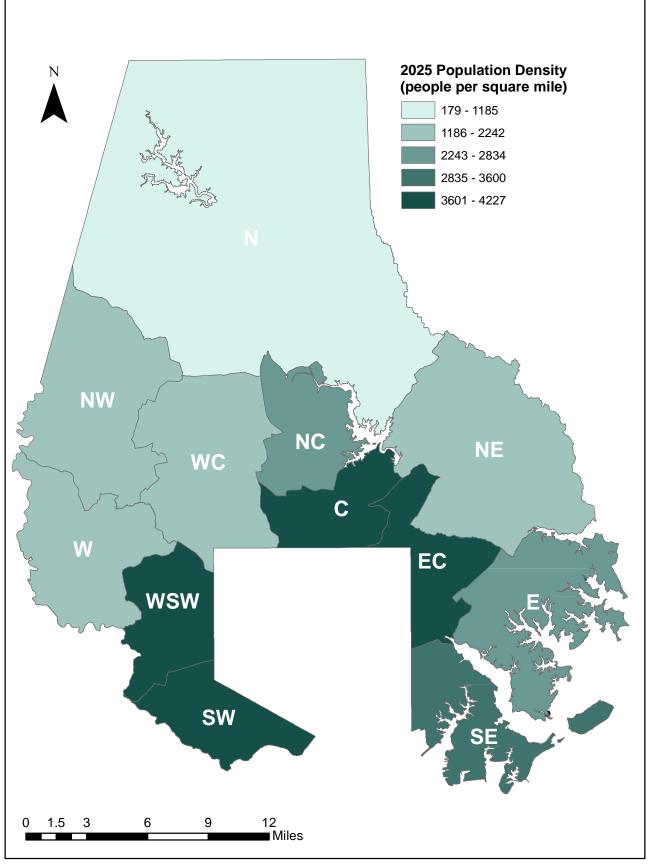


Figure 7. Population Density

Population Growth

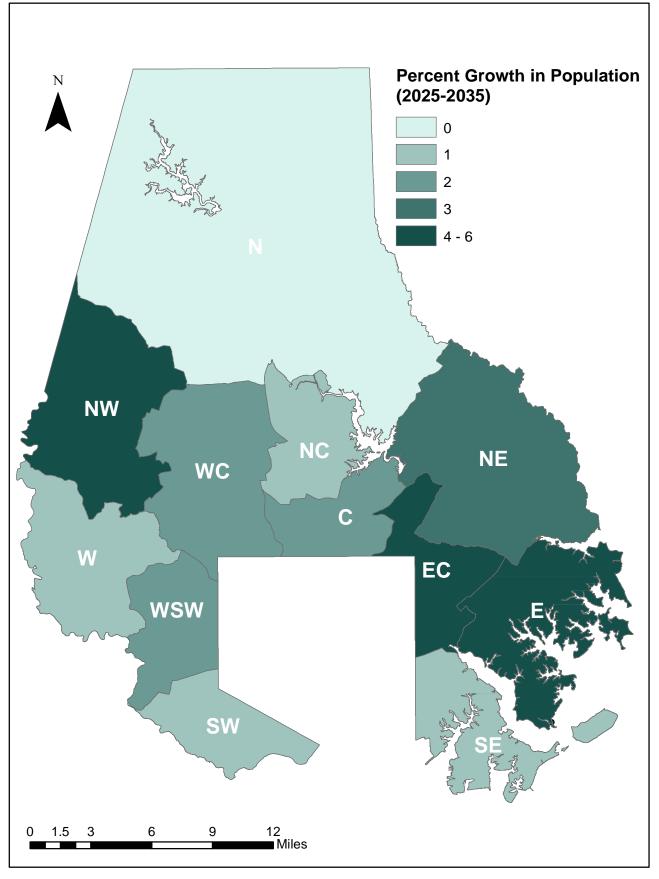
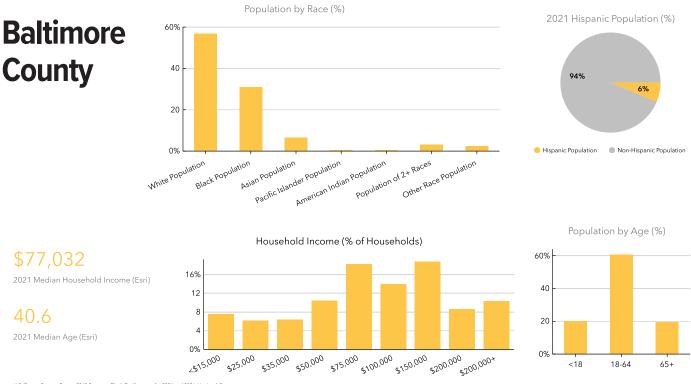


Figure 8. Percent Population Growth (2025-2035)



ource: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. Version 1.2

Figure 9. Demographic Characteristics, Baltimore County

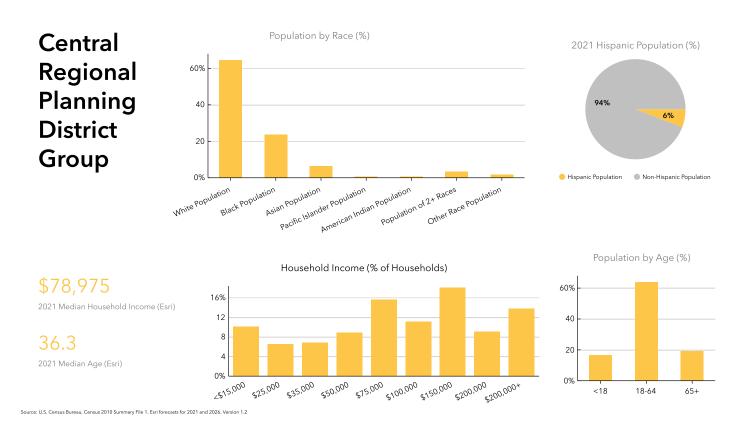
The median income for all of Baltimore County is about \$77,000 and the median age is 40.6 with about 20% of residents aged under 18 and 20% over 65+. Across the County, almost 60% of residents are White and about 30% are Black. About 6% of residents are Hispanic.

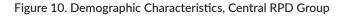
These demographic characteristics vary across the geography of Baltimore County. The following pages present demographic information on race, ethnicity, income, and age for each of the regional planning district groups. Discussions of demographics and vulnerable populations are continued at the end of Chapter Four.

The highest median income (\$120,632) and age (48.8) are in the North RPD group, while the lowest median income (\$56,516) is in the Southeast and the lowest median age (36.3) is in the Central RPD Group, which is home to two colleges/universities. The Northwest RPD Group has the highest percentage of Hispanic population (11%). A majority of residents are Black in the West (76%) and West Southwest (74%). The North Central has the highest percentage of Asian Residents (14%).

In recent years, Baltimore County has responded to requests from residents to better serve our diverse and changing population. For example, Latino/a residents have requested futsal courts and so several basketball/rollerhockey courts have been converted. In addition, a cricket field was created at Cloverland Park in response to requests from a group of primarily South Asian American residents. Finally, while pickleball has grown in popularity with all ages, retired and 65+ residents have been particularly vocal about making these facilities more abundant. Lines have been added to several multipurpose and tennis courts and there are plans for additional conversions. Changing demographics may create a need for new and different facilities and we aim to respond to residents' requests.

The following pages show demographic characteristics that may influence recreational needs, as we aim especially to serve youth and seniors and communities with lower incomes, who may not be able to afford private recreational amenities and programs. While the demographics provide a background, consultation with communities remains the primary method to best understand the recreational needs of Baltimore County residents.





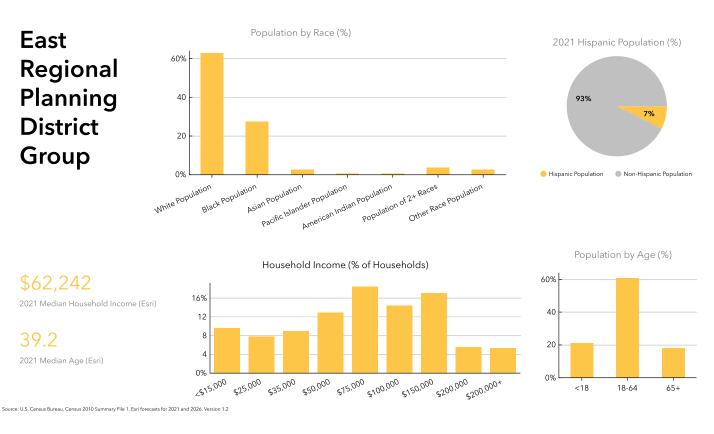
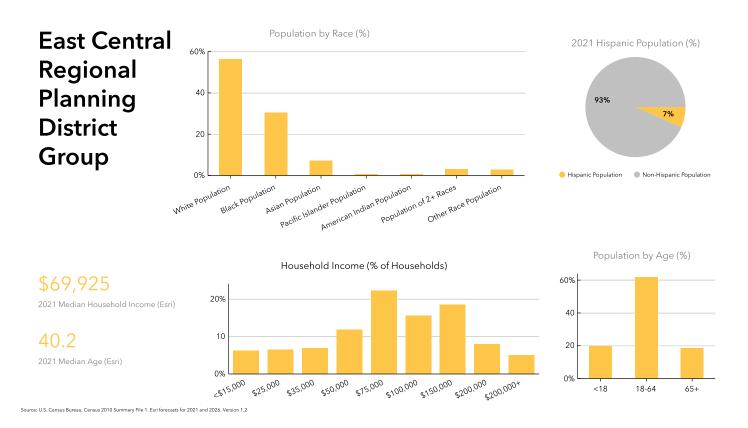
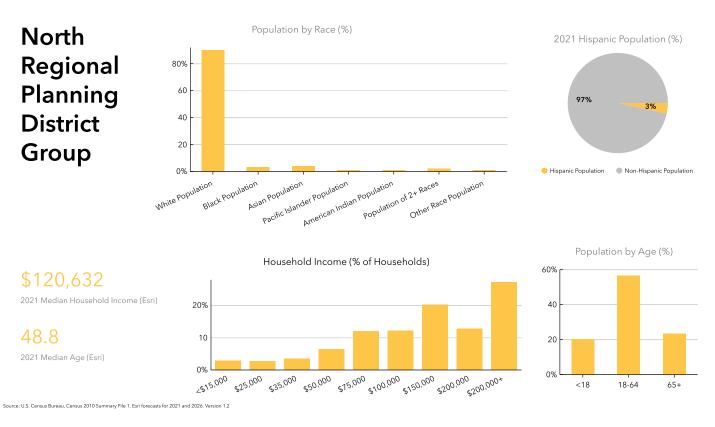


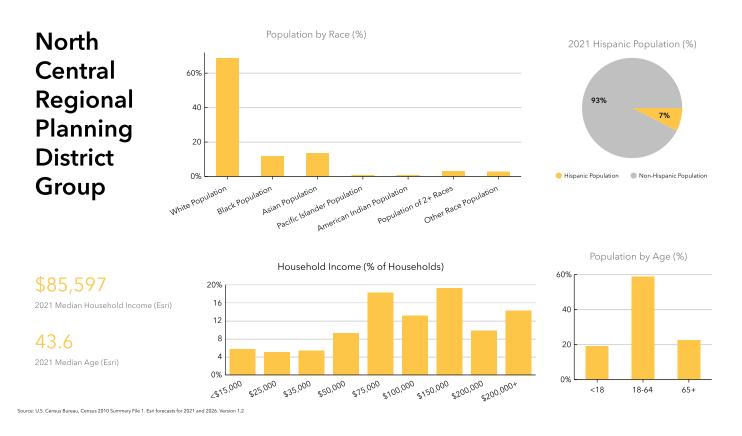
Figure 11. Demographic Characteristics, East RPD Group

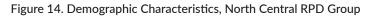


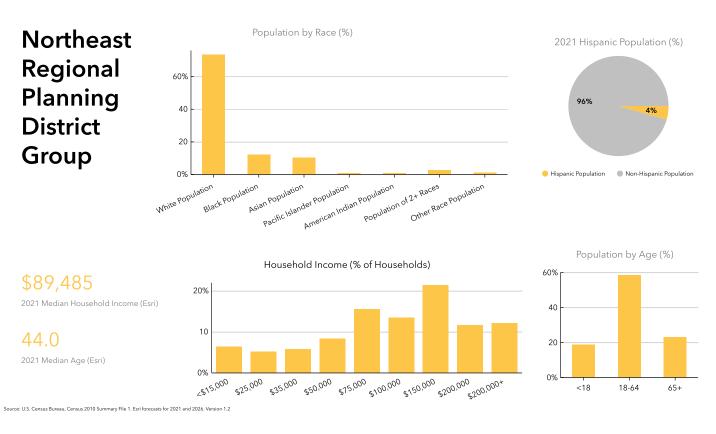




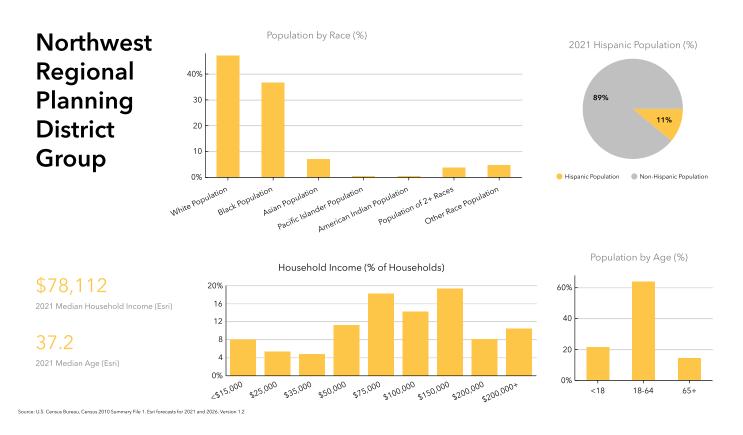


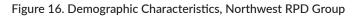


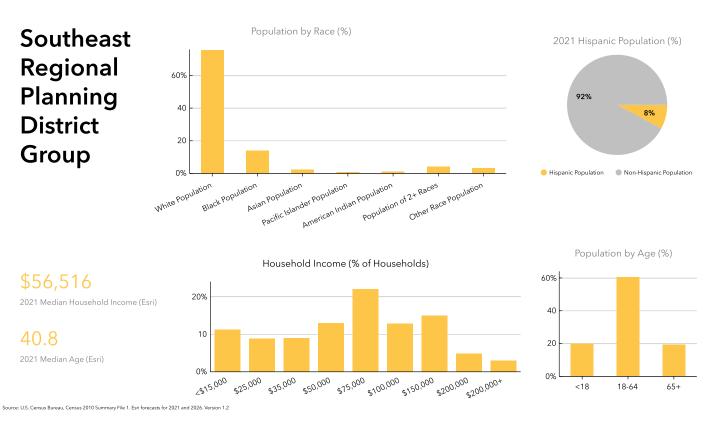


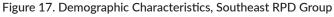


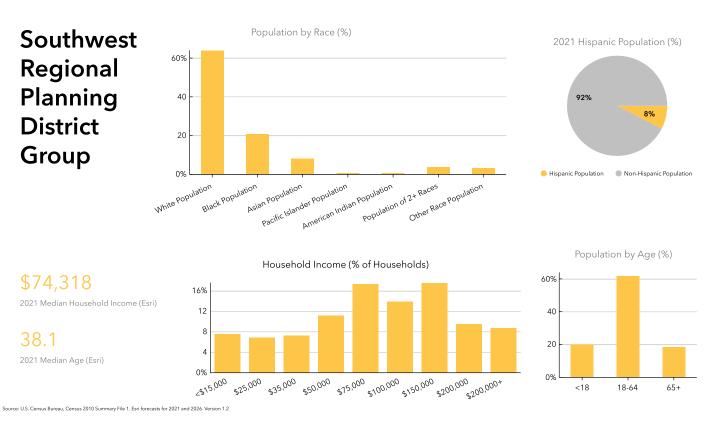














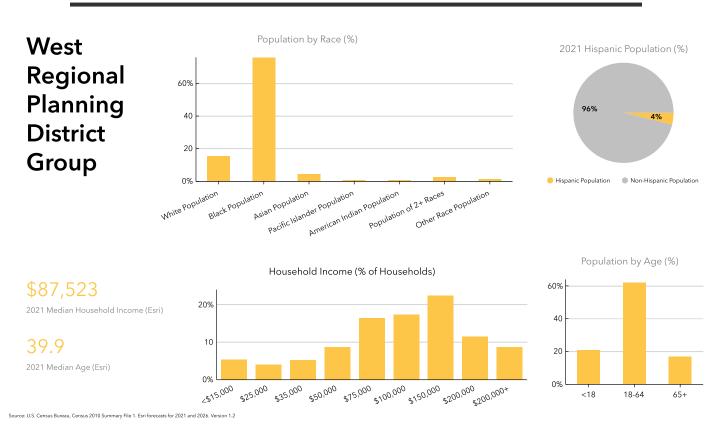


Figure 19. Demographic Characteristics, West RPD Group

